

REFORM LEGISLATION MAKES LICENSE BRANCHES MORE CUSTOMER FRIENDLY

Reducing long waiting at license branches by eliminating the need for some trips to branches and upgrading technology is the aim of a new law that will benefit every motorist. Under the new law, motorists can renew their vehicle license at any license

branch in the state, not only at their home county. The bill also revises the schedule for vehicle registrations so that a portion of each month's registrations will expire in

mid-month, rather than the end of the month.

Further, the bill will enable a driver to renew his or her operator's license by mail or computer every other time the license expires. Licenses must be renewed every four years.

Upgrading license branch technology to make these and other improvements possible will be accomplished by the addition of a 50-cent increase in some license branch fees in each of the next two years.



Senator Beverly Gard

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A LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM **STATE SENATOR BEVERLY GARD**



HEALTH CARE ISSUES TARGET CONSUMERS

Helping to improve access to quality health care for Hoosiers was the focus of several pieces of legislation passed by the General Assembly this session.

Providing individuals information necessary to make informed insurance choices, Senate Bill 229, authored by Gard, creates the position of health insurance educator. As a state employee, the educator will assist consumers in making informed choices regarding the purchase or enrollment in health benefit plans, and their consumer rights and responsibilities.

In addition to informing consumers about their insurance choices, Senate Bill 365, also authored by Gard, requires enrollees in health insurance plans to be informed of their right to appeal an insurer's denial of a medical service. The insurance company also must provide a written description of the appeal procedure to the patient at the time of the denial.

Gard sponsored House Bill 1396, which will require health

care providers to keep patients' original mammogram films and reports for up to 10 years. Providers must also supply the original films and copies of the reports to patients upon request.

Helping to ensure the availability of breast cancer treatment to all women, HB 1938, also sponsored by Gard, will expand Medicaid coverage of breast and cervical cancer therapies to include women whose family income does not exceed twice the federal poverty level and who are screened and found to need treatment under the federal Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act.

Honoring a person's wishes to donate his or her organs to others is the aim of HB1628. This legislation will require a family to honor a decedent's anatomical gift donation. It also provides that the family does not have legal standing to refuse to honor the wishes of the decedent unless he or she revoked the anatomical gift before death.

Keep in touch!

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GRANTS FOR TECHNOLOGY FUND

programs. During its first two years, the fund made 43 awards totaling over \$49 million for projects ranging from spinal surgery techniques to the development of low-noise jet aircraft engines. Grants made by the fund have leveraged nearly \$100 million in additional capital provided by project partners. To date, 191 partners from around the state, nation, and world have been involved in merging outside funds and expertise with Indiana's technology base. These projects are important to the entire state because they are crucial to capturing jobs in the high-technology arena. By encouraging and investing in the development of innovation within the state, we are more likely to retain direct production jobs that result from this research.

A SAFER INDIANA: TAKING AIM AT DRUNKEN DRIVING, DRUGS, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

During the 2001 session, lawmakers adopted legislation that will better protect citizens from drunken drivers, substance abusers, and violent criminals.

The legislature passed a proposal that lowers the percentage of blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to prove driving while intoxicated. Under this law, drivers will face prosecution for operating a motor vehicle or watercraft with a .08 percent BAC. This legislation also means that the state will not lose federal highway funding as a result of last year's federal legislation requiring states to adopt the .08 standard by 2003.

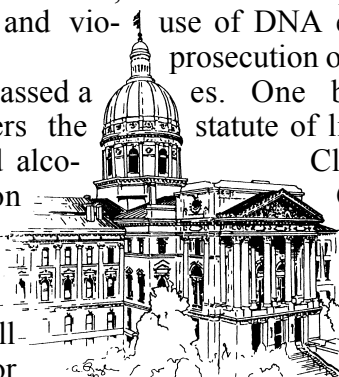
Criminal penalties were increased for offenses relating to methamphetamine. By doing this, the penalties will parallel those relating to cocaine and narcotic drugs. A provision was added to establish penalties for illegal use or storage of anhydrous ammo-

nia, which serves as a component in methamphetamine production.

Two bills provide for the use of DNA evidence in the prosecution of felony offenses. One bill alters the statute of limitations for a Class B or Class C felony to allow prosecution within one year of DNA identification of the offender. The

second bill allows convicted felons to petition a court to require forensic DNA testing and analysis of any evidence that may exonerate or reduce the sentence of the person.

The legislature also established an address confidentiality program for victims of domestic violence. Also, the filing fee was eliminated for motions relating to protective orders to prevent domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault, or to enforce another state's protective order.



NEW LAW DISCONNECTS UNWANTED TELEMARKETERS

Besieged at home by unwanted telephone solicitations, Indiana residents now may add their names to a state-wide "no call" list, thanks to a bill enacted this year with my support.

Under the new law, Indiana Attorney General Steve Carter will collect Hoosiers' phone numbers and publish a list of numbers before Jan. 1, 2002.

Once the list is in operation, telemarketers may not call any phone number appearing on the list, which will be updated four times per year. Telemarketers can

be fined \$10,000 for the first violation and \$25,000 for each subsequent violation.

Exempt organizations include charities, Indiana-licensed real estate agents and insurance agents, and newspapers, provided that calls are made by employees or volunteers of the organization.

To add your phone number to the "no call" list, telephone Attorney General Carter's office toll-free at 1-888-834-9969 or 1-800-382-5516. The service is free of charge.



Senator Gard (center) joins Legislative Services attorney Bob Bond (left) and Senator Kent Adams (R-Warsaw) (right) during a Senate committee meeting.